



The Grebe

Volume 6, Issue 2

Spring 2010

Mission of The Friends of
Deer Flat:

The purpose of this group is to promote, protect, and provide resources to preserve and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

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Osprey Webcam Is Near Reality

What is the Webcam Project?

The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge have partnered with Katie McVey, an AmeriCorps member serving at Deer Flat; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Fiberpipe Internet Services; and Gem State Communications to install a Webcam at the refuge. Local businesses and individuals have helped out too! Wild Birds Unlimited, Roots Rents, The Hamburger Connection, Bird House & Habitat, Canyon County Mosquito Abatement District, The Owyhee Garden Club, Michael & Magdalene Chenore, and Cabelas have all lent a hand.



Osprey on nest

The webcam project will promote interest in the osprey, a large fish-eating hawk, which returns to the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge each year to raise and care for its young. The webcam was installed in mid-March on a perch pole near the known osprey nest site, just south of the refuge visitor center. As part of this project, the Friends are hosting a website and have placed a television in the visitor center at Deer Flat with live-streaming video, and have created educational materials for classroom use. Mid-March was the target date for installation of the webcam, so that it would be up and running by the time the pair of osprey returns to the nest site about April 1st. At publication time of this newsletter, only a few minor adjustments needed to be made to complete the webcam setup. Once the webcam internet site is up and running, Friends members and partners will be notified of how to access the site.

Who Does the Webcam Project Benefit?

With an up close view into an osprey nest, refuge visitors and people from all over the world will learn how ospreys raise their young. A companion blog for the website will allow people to find out about osprey natural history and keep informed about the events at the nest, as well as ask questions about osprey, and about Lake Lowell and Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

Local schools, through field trips and website viewing, will benefit from a new opportunity to link technology with biology in their own backyard. Osprey educational materials will help foster an appreciation of the natural world and encourage students to go outside. It is anticipated that over 10,000 people will view the webcam this spring.

Continued on page 10

By Noreen Tripp

On February 27th we had a wonderful "Evening at the Refuge" with our "Friends." It was a great time and participants met the new Refuge staff and the new Friends Executive Board. They were also entertained with an informative slide show by Bob Christensen and enjoyed some great desserts. Committee members, Dixie Blome and Lee McGlinsky did a wonderful job putting the evening together and many thanks to Jon Dobbs, Al Glinsky and Bob Blome who came early to help set up the tables.

Our guests were invited to write something about Deer Flat Refuge. Following are some of their comments:

"Love the open vistas - water, trees, sky, and sage."

"I love spending time at the Refuge. Observing nature, in any one day you can see a Bald Eagle do a flyby or a Sharp-shinned Hawk catch his lunch."

"I love "walking on the trails/roads. The coop"

"I am so proud of the beautiful visitors' center. Wonderful atmosphere. Great board members. Loved the cake."

"I really love that the staff is involved with kids and their education."
-Kelsee Willett

"Bringing our great granddaughters to walk the trail, watch the birds and for them to realize the refuge is so much more than just a lake to water ski"
-Frank Worden

"I love the sound of Western Meadow Larks and Song Sparrows in the morning."
-Katie McVey

This year we have had a great response to our request for birdseed and for volunteers to fill the feeders. Because the response was so good, we will be filling the feeders at the Visitor Center and the photo blind through March.

I would like to say thank-you to our volunteers who kept the feeders full:

Cathy Eells, Dixie Blome, Erin Murray, Frank Worden, Jim Holcomb, Jim Iverson, Kathleen Cookham, Lee & Al McGlinsky, Mark Sherwood, Mary Jean Sanders, Peter & Meryle Berkhart, and Shannan Lind.

Mark your calendar...

Upcoming Events

Scout Days

Saturday, April 10th, 1 to 3 p.m.

Lecture Series

Tuesday, April 13th, 7:00 p.m. - ***Native Plants for Treasure Valley Landscapes***

Weed Warriors

Saturday, April 17th, 9 to 11 a.m. - Help improve wildlife habitat. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Earth Day—Work Day

Saturday, April 12, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. - Meet at the Visitor Center

Scout Days

Saturday, May 1st, 1 to 3 p.m.

Lecture Series

Tuesday, May 11th, 7:00 p.m. - ***30 Years of Watching Idaho Butterflies***

Weed Warriors

Saturday, May 15th, 9 to 11 a.m. - Help improve wildlife habitat. Meet at the Visitor Center.

BioBlitz - Explore and Celebrate Diversity at Deer Flat

Saturday, June 12th, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Kids Fishing Day - While you are at the BioBlitz you can also participate in fishing related activities.

Saturday, June 12th, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Weed Warriors

Saturday, June 19th, 9 to 11 a.m. - Help improve wildlife habitat. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Desert Detectives Summer Camp

Saturday, June 21st thru 25th, mornings

Scout Day Information. Sign up your wolf, bear, and webelo Cub Scouts or Brownie and Junior Girl Scouts to earn wildlife-related badges. Pre-registration is required. Call 467-9278 or e-mail deerflat@fws.gov to pre-register.

Desert Detectives Critter Camp.

June 21-25 (mornings) for kids entering grades 2-3. Explore how plants and animals survive life in the desert through activities, nature walks, crafts, and games. Register early; space is limited! Call 467-9278 or email deerflat@fws.gov

Biodiversity Basics Camp. July 12-16 (mornings) for kids entering grades 4-5. Explore the amazing variety of plant and animals that call the refuge home. Register early; space is limited! Call 467-9278 or email deerflat@fws.gov

Upcoming Refuge Events:

For more information on all events, contact the refuge at 467-9278 or deerflat@fws.gov

An Evening at the Refuge

"The Evening" started with members of the Friends group greeting guests at the door and handing out tickets for door prizes, beautiful primroses graced the room, and the tables overflowed with delicious desserts including an amazing cake creation by The Job Corp.

A short business meeting was opened and conducted by President Noreen Tripp who warmly welcomed everyone and then introduced the Officers:

President - Noreen Tripp
Vice President - Genevieve Johannsen
Treasurer - Bob Christensen
Secretary - Dixie Blome

The officers were accepted and ratified and the Treasurer's Report was submitted.

Following the business meeting, Susan Kain was introduced; she thanked the Friends Group for their continued support and then introduced the new Refuge Manager, Jennifer Brown-Scott. Jennifer told us about her background and experiences; she talked briefly about the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and how important it is that the public be involved, and, in turn, introduced her new Assistant Manager, Kendra Willet. Kendra informed the audience that every volunteer hour translates into \$20.00 an hour for grant monies that are sorely needed for the existing and proposed programs such as the Osprey Webcam and the Busing Program. The management of the Snake River Islands, an existing program, was explained and Kendra thanked all the volunteers who expressed their continuing interest and enjoyment in the refuge.

Bob Christensen, our local director and film producer, entertained us with wonderful new photos of the refuge. Following Bob was Katie McVey, an AmeriCorps member, who led us on the exciting and beginning happenings of the Osprey WebCam and explained the partnering with Fiber Pipe. Bob Christensen is working with Katie on this project and they hoped to have the webcam in place by March 12th but that date has been pushed back to the week of March 15th. A blog will also be accessible with daily information about the osprey nest. Lauren Roden, the newest AmeriCorps member, is now in place as the Volunteer Coordinator and she talked about her upcoming projects, a day of education and Training at the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge identifying invasive and threatening aquatic wildlife species and encouraged everyone to participate to fully enjoy what the Refuge has to offer.



Dixie Blome dishes cake at the 'Evening at the Refuge'

(continued on page 5)

At this point the group dispersed to visit the various informational set-ups, to perhaps try a different dessert, and then returned for the door prizes to be awarded. The "Evening at the Refuge" was over but will be remembered as educational, inspiring and fun - don't miss the next one!!!!

It was a great beginning for the Friends' year at the Refuge - Jon Dobbs and Bob Blome, arrived early and set up



Evening at the Refuge

tables and chairs and then Lee and Al McGlinsky did their magic at transforming the tables. Meanwhile the coffee was set to perk, desserts flowed in and the CAKE was presented. Another table had to be pulled in to hold this wonderful surprise! The Job Corp came through again; the cake was delicious and beautifully decorated under Jack's supervision and the skills of the staff. Genevieve Johannsen, our new Vice President, wore many hats, greeting and handing out door prize tickets, and official photographer. A special thanks to Julie Straight and to everyone else who graciously helped out at the dessert table.

Students Invited to Participate in Endangered Species Day Art Contest

Students from kindergarten through high school are invited to celebrate Endangered Species Day – May 21, 2010 – with original artwork. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Endangered Species Coalition, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art/ University of New Orleans are sponsoring the art contest. Started in 2006 by the United States Congress, Endangered Species Day recognizes the importance of endangered species and educates the public about how to protect them.

Entries are due March 26. A national panel of highly-acclaimed artists and conservationists will judge the art works. Winners will be chosen in four age categories and one national winner will be selected. The winning artwork will be displayed at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art/ University of New Orleans in May 2010. One national winner will be honored at a reception in Washington, DC.

National wildlife refuges are home to more than 280 of the nation's 1,311 endangered or threatened species. Fifty-nine refuges were established specifically to protect one or more endangered species. The Endangered Species Coalition is a national network of conservation, scientific, education, religious, sporting, outdoor recreation, humane, business and community groups. For more information go to www.EndangeredSpeciesDay.org

A Place of Renewal – And What We Take for Granted

By Greg Siekaniec
Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

For the past quarter century, Katy Sheehan Morris and Susan Macdonald Bray have kept their friendship fresh and vibrant through their connection with Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Missouri. Sure, Katy was a bridesmaid in Susan's wedding. And for years, they've swapped stories about child rearing and family successes and travails.

But what's given them a sense of renewal year after year? A fall weekend of birding, hiking and camping at Swan Lake Refuge, an easy drive from Kansas City. They missed the annual trip the year that Bray got married and for a few years when pregnancies made such travel a little tough. But they haven't skipped the trip for very many years.

They camp at Pershing State Park, next door to Swan Lake Refuge, where they have seen coyote pups, armadillos, egrets and white pelicans – including the pelican migration. "For me, this trip is a renewal," says Bray, who works for the Kansas City Department of Parks and Recreation. "I couldn't go into winter without hearing the wild call of geese every fall," says Morris, who trained as a naturalist – as did Bray.

They discovered Swan Lake Refuge when they led a children's field trip to the refuge and learned of its wildness and naturalist values. "Thank goodness for the Refuge System and its pockets of nature," says Morris.

Typical story? Not really. But more and more, it should be – and it could be.

The first step for us is to understand that being comfortable and knowledgeable about the natural world isn't second nature to the millions of youngsters – and their parents – who live in high-density cities. Just consider a recent round of the television game show, *Jeopardy*, when none of the contestants could identify North America's tallest bird. At the time, I was with a group of Fish and Wildlife Service employees who blurted the question before that answer was read. We knew, but what does that tell us about America's natural resource education when three, obviously intelligent individuals were stumped by a "whooping crane" question? It made us all pause.

Second, we need to find and support more people like Katy and Susan to be mentors to young people, to teach them to camp, hike, fish, hunt, identify birds and be comfortable in nature. Your community may well be filled with people whose passion is the natural world – but they may not know it. As your new year's resolution, make it your business to bring them into the National Wildlife Refuge System fold. America's conservation future depends on it.

I'll see you in the field.

BioBlitz count Photo by Mike Shipman



Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge encourages students to *Discover Wildlife Journeys...* through a new field trip and teacher scholarship program.

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge has partnered with Canyon County Parks, Recreation, and Waterways, the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, and Northwest Nazarene University to design and implement a new field trip to discover the Lake Lowell ecosystem.

Fourth, fifth, and sixth graders will have the chance to: investigate animal migrations large and small, explore aquatic communities in Lake Lowell, observe what's in the water using a microscope, watch birds, and collect and classify terrestrial invertebrates. Students will learn through hands-on, inquiry based experiences presented by trained naturalists... and have fun splashing around in Lake Lowell! Plus, they will receive workbooks with pre- and post-visit activities correlated with Idaho Achievement Standards.

The biggest hurdle to this new program is schools' ability to travel to the Refuge because many schools have recently cut field trip funding. **The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge are proud to announce a Teacher Support Scholarship to help defray the cost of bussing students to the refuge.** This is an awesome opportunity to allow local schools to visit the refuge. The Friends, along with Refuge staff, are developing an application and guidelines for schools who could like to apply. A recent grant will help fund Fall 2010 field trips, but we will need more donations and grants to help make this Teacher Support Scholarship a permanent feature. To learn more about the field trip, teacher support scholarship or how you can help email deerflat@fws.gov or call 208.467.9278. And watch for upcoming fundraising information!



To Green Your Garden, Go Native

How 'green' is your garden? Well, now may be the time to order seeds of wildflowers native to your region that will give you low-maintenance blooms next spring and all summer long. Not only will they thrive — they'll support native birds, insects and other pollinators that depend on familiar, home-grown species for a healthy ecosystem.

"Native species evolved in the local environment and have developed complex interrelationships with other area plant species as well as fine tuning to local climate and soil conditions," says Kathleen Blair, an ecologist at Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona. Exotic plant species — non-natives, including many commercially available garden flowers — haven't. That means, she says, "If you plant non-native or exotic species, a whole lot of other local species cannot use them."

It's possible that going native might help save a local ecosystem, or at least parts of one. That's what motivates Pauline Drobney, a biologist at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa, where the staff is working to restore the globally threatened tall grass prairie savannah. Each year, says Drobney, staff and volunteers plant up to 250 species of native plants on the refuge.

Does planting native mean sacrificing flash and drama? No way, says Drobney, who won over a skeptical neighbor by showing him the butterfly milkweed and blazing star in her yard. "It was just knock-your-socks-off color," she says.

Some non-natives or exotics have become ecological nightmares, escaping backyards to rampage across entire regions, choking out native species as they spread. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*, native to Europe) is a prime example. "It's a nightmare of a plant. It's now clogging up the wetlands of the East Coast," says Blair.

Beyond that, planting an appropriate species will improve your odds of success. Some wildflowers are highly site-specific in terms of rainfall, elevation and soil type.

Here are just a few examples of some native wildflower favorites:

Southwest: lupine, beard-tongue (or penstemon; a real hummingbird favorite)

Pacific Northwest: broad-leaf lupine, spreading phlox

For reliable information on plants native to your region, consult your local native plant society. Some other good sources are:

- Department of Agriculture: <http://plants.usda.gov/> or <http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/nativegardening/index.shtml>
- Native Plant Information Network <http://www.wildflower.org/> — houses a native plant database
- Plant Conservation Alliance <http://www.nps.gov/plants/> — contains links to plant guides by region.
- U.S. National Arboretum <http://www.usna.usda.gov/> — search "native plants".



Alpine anemone

Wildlife in a Box

By Bob Christensen

The other day, I was introduced to the "Wood Duck Nest Box Project"—a long name for a fun experience. What is the nest box project? Well, a short description will suffice -- over the years, numerous nest boxes have been attached to trees around the perimeter of Lake Lowell. Early each year, these boxes are cleaned out so they will be ready for a new nesting season. The primary objective is to provide an attractive and suitable nesting site for wood ducks, one of America's most beautiful waterfowl species.

Long ago, biologists recognized that the wood duck had an affinity for nesting in the cavity of trees which were situated close to a stream or a body of water. So, what followed has been the practice of putting up artificial nest boxes in areas where there are few natural nesting cavities. This practice has persuaded this marvelous duck to expand its breeding range, resulting in an increase in population numbers.

At Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, wood duck boxes have been installed not only in the woodlands around Lake Lowell, but also on many of the Snake River islands that are also part of the refuge. These boxes have been built and mounted on trees by different volunteer groups and individuals over the years. The challenge in the program has been maintaining the boxes in good conditions and keeping them cleaned out. During the last 10 years, Jim Holcomb, a member of the Friends group and a member of the Southwest Idaho Birders Association, has taken it on himself to maintain and clean the nest boxes around Lake Lowell. For many years he did this by himself. Now that he has volunteer helpers each year, he admits it goes much faster and is a lot easier on his physical well-being.

What kind of experiences do these volunteers enjoy as they help with this project? Well, I can only give you my recent experience. First, each box is checked to see if it is structurally sound. Worn or broken parts are repaired or replaced. Where appropriate, new boxes are installed. Each box is cleaned out from the previous year's litter, which may consist of an old wood duck nest, addled eggs, a squirrel nest, or other debris.

Information on past and recent wildlife use is recorded. Then new sawdust is added to provide a suitable nesting base for the upcoming nesting season.

Are there any surprises? Most certainly! Some boxes may have resident wildlife already at home. For this reason, each box inspector carries a big stick to bang on the side of the box, in hopes that surprises may be minimized -- not only for the potential resident, but for the inspector, as well. The first box we opened had a screech owl staring us in the face. In another box, a screech owl fluttered out of the box only after being nudged by an unsuspecting gloved hand. Both boxes were closed immediately, and left to the birds that claimed them as home. On about our fourth box, we wrapped loudly on the side, bottom and top, without a response. We removed the nails from the lid and started pulling it open. There was a flash of brown from the entry hole, and a blurred aberration flew to the next tree and was gone. Fred Bilbrey, my companion, nearly toppled from the ladder, while I was trying to determine if I had really seen anything. But, yes! It was a fox squirrel, making a more than hasty retreat from her nest. Upon further inspection, we found two baby squirrels beneath six inches of leaf litter. With hearts still thumping, we carefully replaced the leafy blanket and closed the box.



Inspecting a nest box



Julie Straight & Jim Holcomb
Cleaning Nest Box



Baby Fox Squirrel

How Can You Help?

We will need volunteers of all types and financial support to make this project a lasting success.

Osprey-cam seeks volunteers! become an...

Osprey Observer: watch the webcam and report interesting behaviors.

Osprey Provider: write and update the Osprey Blog.

Osprey Endorser: approve comments for the Osprey Blog.

Osprey Enabler: donate and support the webcam. This spring Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge received a modest grant which allowed this Osprey-cam to become a reality. We need continued financial support to keep the webcam and blog up and running. Please consider donating to the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, a 501(c)3 non-profit group.



Contacts: Katie McVey
AmeriCorps Volunteer
Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge
katie_mcvey@fws.gov
208-467-9278

Bob Christensen
Treasurer
Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
rcloydchris@juno.com
208-454-2518

Donations can be sent to:
Friends of Deer Flat: Webcam
13751 Upper Embankment Rd
Nampa, ID 83686



Jim Installing New Nest Box

More “Wildlife in a Box” Photos



Abandoned Wood Duck Eggs

“This box is occupied!”

Winter Survival Day Camp

Twenty-two campers from all over the Treasure Valley came to the refuge on January 30th for Hibernate, Migrate, or Insulate, an all-day camp to learn how animals survive the challenges of winter. The fun-filled day included putting on coats for insulation against the winter temperatures, looking for good places to hibernate, trying to migrate through obstacles in the back yard, and watching birds from the Friends-built bird blind. Campers also made winter murals of their favorite animals. Winter Camp ended with a winter song performance and award presentation. Thank you to the campers and the Friends' and refuge volunteers for such a great day!

Special thanks to the Friends for providing funds to purchase camper snacks. They were much appreciated. One camper expressed it well in a thank you note: "The snacks were good, too. Tasty and great. Yum! Yum! Yummy! Yum!"



Help us celebrate Biodiversity!
We need your help on June 11 and 12 to make
Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge's 5th Annual BioBlitz a success!

A BioBlitz is a 24-hr rapid inventory of biological diversity and Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge hosts the only one in Idaho! A huge part of this survey of life on the refuge is the BioBlitz festival on Saturday June 12th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. The festival is free, open to the public and jam-packed with activities like guided boat trips to net fish on Lake Lowell, hummingbird banding demonstrations, native bird & plant walks, and insect collecting expeditions.

Last year over 400 people came to the festival, and volunteers like you helped the event run smoothly. New this year is Kids Fishing Day! We also ordered cooler weather and no blue-green algae!

Interested in volunteering or surveying? Please fill out the attached form and send it to Lauren Roden at lauren_roden@fws.gov or call 467-9278. Know someone who would like to help with the BioBlitz? Please let us know. We look forward to BioBlitzing with you in June!



----- Detach and return the bottom -----

BioBlitz Volunteer Sign-up for June 12th 2010

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____ E-mail: _____

Times available (volunteers needed 8 AM - 4PM): _____

Please check up to 3 jobs you are interested in volunteering for at BioBlitz:

- ☐ Bug Tent attendant - leads groups to net insects, uses microscopes to examine specimens and more!
- ☐ Kid Craft Room attendant - oversees the craft projects, stocks supplies
- ☐ Photographer - documents surveyors and the festival
- ☐ Surveyor or Field assistant - lead or assist with surveys of refuge wildlife and plants
- ☐ Parking attendant - directs traffic and shuttles visitors to the boat tours
- ☐ Lead guided walks - leads interpretive walks for the public in your area of expertise
- ☐ Festival set-up and clean-up crew - also includes odd jobs at the event
- ☐ New! Kids Fishing Day attendant - helps with fishing-related activities and crafts
- ☐ Mascot - wears the Blue Goose costume, the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System

Send to: Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge
 13751 Upper Embankment Rd Nampa, Idaho 83686

Or



Photo by Dick McGee

Photo by Robin Peterson

Thank You!

**Winter feeding of the birds at “The Coop”
has been a tremendous success this winter.**

*Thank You to the Following Volunteers
Who Have Fed the Birds This Winter*

Cathy Eells
Noreen Tripp
Lee & Al McGlinsky
Frank Worden
Peggy Williams
Jim Iverson
Peter & Meryle Burkhart

Dixie Blome
Shannan Lind
Jim Holcomb
Mark Sherwood
Mary Jean Sanders
Erin Murray
Kathleen Cookham

*Thank You to the Following Businesses and Individuals
Who Have Donated Seed or Funds for Seed*

Wild Birds Unlimited - Boise
Zamzows - Nampa
Owyhee Gardeners - Marsing
Valley High Angus Ranch
Southwestern Idaho Birders Association
Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
D & B Supply

Laura Wilkens
Dave & Helen Root
Mike Sweatt
Teresa Baker
Paul Plante
April Shryock
Mr. & Mrs. Kirby Vickers



"The Coop" Viewing Blind



**FRIENDS OF DEER
FLAT WILDLIFE
REFUGE**

13751 Upper Embankment
Road
Nampa, Idaho 83686-8046

Executive Board:

President - Noreen Tripp
(936-3130)

Vice President - Genevieve
Johannsen (467-7515)

Secretary - Dixie Blome
(466-2148)

Treasurer - Bob
Christensen (454-2518)

Newsletter - Denise Hughes
(850-5885)

We are on the web at:
[www.fws.gov/deerflat/](http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/friends.htm)
[friends.htm](http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/friends.htm)

Photo by Mark Lisac,
Refugenet

To preserves and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

The Grebe is published four times a year — look for the next issue in June 2010

Lecture Series Programs

April 13th – Native Plants for Treasure Valley Landscapes

Just in time for spring, join local expert, Ann DeBolt, to discover Idaho's native plants and learn how to incorporate them in your yard.

-Ann DeBolt, Natural Community Specialist, Idaho Botanical Garden



May 11th – 30 Years of Watch- ing Idaho's Butterflies

Learn more about these wonderful winged gems. Enjoy photos, tricks for spotting, and stories about butterflies from a local insect enthusiast.

-Paul Castroville, Orma J. Smith Museum, College of Idaho

